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ABSTRACT

Five farms in Union County in extreme southern Illinois were studied in depth, and about 100 more were briefly surveyed to ascertain how the farm women's roles have changed over the years. Well into the twentieth century, the male and female domains on these farms were relatively well defined. Within the barn and its yards, the husband had primary authority over the organization of space and work; within the house and its yards, the wife had primary authority. The husband's domain was primarily oriented to commodity production and the pursuit of profits, with production for use subordinated to production for the market. Conversely, the wife's domain was primarily oriented to the production for use values and the reproduction of the family which constituted the immediate work force, with commodity production subordinated to consumption needs. Changes in technology, production techniques, and the economy have gradually transformed the organization of farmsteads. The modern farm, organized increasingly along industrial lines, has replaced women's prior productive functions with equipment and cash. Like nonfarm women, farmer's wives, too, have left their place within the operation of the farm for wage labor outside the home and farm. Unless a woman assumes new roles on the farm, leaving her separate domain to become a bookkeeper, marketing expert, or farm hand, her life in the 1980s is little different from her nonfarming rural and small-town counterpart. A 56-item bibliography is included and 5 figures, including floor plans of the forms discussed, are appended. (JB)

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The Attenuation of Women's Role on Southern Illinois Farmsteads in the Twentieth Century

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Paper given at the National Womens Studies Convention
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NOTE: This paper is a relatively finished draft of a paper submitted for publication. This version contains a few facts still to be checked, incomplete citations, and so forth, as noted in text.

It is a commonplace to note the profound transformation that has occurred in farming in the United States in the last half-century. Part of this transformation has been technical--the replacement of horse and mule power with tractors and a wide range of heavy equipment, the replacement of home-grown seeds with hybrids, the addition of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to better control and increase productivity. Part of the transformation has been in the organization of production itself--the shift from diversification to a few cash crops, the elimination of the self-provisioning parts of the farm operation, the replacement of most labor by machines, and the vastly increased scale of most farms.

Agricultural historians (e.g., Cochrane 1979, Fite 1981, Rasmussen and Baker 1979, Shover 1976), economists and policy makers (e.g., Tweeten 1970, Committee for Economic Development 1945, 1956, 1957, 1962) all stress the revolution brought about by the massive replacement of labor with capital and stress the importance of various public policies and wider economic processes in promoting these changes. These included the provision of low-cost credit by both government and private lenders after World War II, the extension of electricity and telephones into rural areas, largely through the Rural Electric Administration, massive road-improvement programs, from interstates to farm-to-market roads, the development of the educational and health care

systems, the development of highly concentrated marketing systems, new technical developments, especially chemicals, and, perhaps most important, the burgeoning industrial economy of post-War U.S., which sucked labor from rural areas into relatively high-wage manufacturing, leaving farmers without necessary low-wage labor. This last factor, when combined with cheap credit, an agressive farm extension program that promoted technical innovation, and a strong market for agricultural products as Europe rebuilt under the Marshall Plan, provided strong incentives for farmers to invest heavily in capital equipment.

What has been vastly ignored by these historians has been the dramatic transformation of the "household" side of farm production. As Fink (1986:231, see also Fink 1984, Jensen 1980, 1986) argues, until the post-War capitalization of agricultural production, women's household production was "an essential part in reproducing the farm labor force." While men's production in the fields provisioned the horse power and provided cash income for further investments in land, buildings, and equipment, women's production in the household largely fed, clothed and, through giving birth to many children, created the work force. These two forms and aims of production, although complementary and mutually interdepedent, tended to operate on distinct economic logics. The husband's domain was primarily oriented to commodity production and the pursuit of profits--the expansion of the farm operation--with production for use (e.g., feeding the horses and mules, making fences) subordinated to production for the market. Conversely, the wife's domain was primarily oriented to the production of use values and the reproduction of the family and immediate work force, with commodity production subordinated to consumption needs.

These distinct domains, characterized by Matthaei (1982) as "family

economy," organized the work necessary for both relatively self-sufficing "peasant" style production and petty commodity production (Friedmann 1978a, 1978b, 1980). The family and household existed as an integral, although subordinate part of the production process, and remained largely impervious to the developing notions of "separate spheres" which developed in the nineteenth century. Except for the rural elite, who could employ large amounts of household labor, the farm home was no "haven from a heartless world;" mothers were no more concerned with the moral development of their children than were their fathers; aesthetics took a back seat to work. The "cult of domsticity" was successfully extended into the farmstead only after World War II, its practice made possible by the elimination of most of women's productive contributions to the farming operation.

These relations, discernable in the recollections of elderly people who live through the transformation, barely visible in the statistical compendia of the period, are inscribed in the physical space. The transformation of the house from workshop, warehouse, dormitory, dispensary and mess hall to "home" in which "expression" (largely through consumption) predominates, can be seen in the physical lay-out and organization of household space.

The farms I use to illustrate these changes were documented in the course of research in Union County, in extreme southern Illinois. Global characterizations of U.S. agriculture tend to obscure the significant differences that have existed and exist in different regions and ethnic groups (see, e.g., Salamon's central Illinois project which documented the importance of ethnicity in shaping responses to larger processes, Salamon and Keim 1979, Salamon 1987?). Union County, located in the hill region of extreme southern Illinois, is a relatively poor area, long classified "depressed," and in many ways is more comparable to Appalachia, from which many of its residents derived, than it is to the prosperous prairies which people commonly associate

with Illinois agriculture. Its geography is highly diversified, ranging from the extremely fertile flood plain of the Mississippi bottoms on the west, to more or less rugged, loess-covered hills which become increasingly infertile to the east. Probably because of this varied topography, Union County has the most diversified agriculture in Illinois. The Mississippi bottoms, owned largely by absentee land-owners from the 1870s until the Depression years, have long been turned to relatively large-scale production of cash crops--wheat, corn, and pigs in the past; now largely soybeans and grain sorghum (milo). Fruit and vegetable production predominated in the uplands. Until the late 1950s many of the farms were very small and were largely subsistance-oriented. These farm families provided seasonal labor for more prosperous neighbors. Union County was deeply affected by the post-War capitalization of agriculture and concentration of marketing systems; in some ways the impact was greater than in other parts of the state. Only 650--28 percent--of the 2,309 farms enumerated in 1910 existed in 1982. In the state as a whole, the proportion is 41 percent. Far more Union County farms are below the level considered to be "self-supporting" in 1982, that is, $40,000 or more in gross sales (U.S.D.A., Economic, Statistics, and Cooperative Service 1979). Only 17 percent of Union County farms had more than $40,000 in gross sales, while fully one fourth sold less than $2,500 worth of farm products. In Illinois, 46.6 percent of farms sold over $40,000 worth of farm products, and in the United States as a whole the proportion was 28.4 percent.

The combination of the county's hilly topography, the successful competition by California, Texas and Florida horticulture, the declining availability of labor for this very labor-intensive industry, and the increasing concentration of fruit and vegetable markets, which squeezed out small producers, all contributed to the decline of the important fruit and

vegetable industry. Many relatively self-sufficing farms, therefore, have been replaced by retirement and hobby farms, as residents who left in their youth for the factories return to retire and as others, attracted by the area's beauty and inexpensive land, establish part-time and "hobby" farms. Many of these owners rent their land to nearby full-time farmers who lack the owned acreage to be successful—an increasingly pervasive pattern, as indicated by the sharp increase in "part-ownership" by commercial farm operators, from 5 percent in 1939 to 47 percent in 1982 (U.S. Bureau of Commerce, Census of Agriculture 1932, County Table 11; 1982, County Table 16).

Despite these distinctive characteristics, Union County farmers have been fully participant in the larger changes in U.S. agriculture. While they tended to lag behind their more prosperous counterparts in the prairies in innovation, so that the adoption curves presented below will shift somewhat more to the present than would those of central Illinois, the trends are comparable.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FARMSTEAD

Prior to post-War capitalization, farmsteads varied considerably in their size and complexity, dependent largely on the prosperity of the owner, stage of the family life cycle, and existence or absence of extended family ties. The five farms studied in depth and the 100 or so other farms more briefly surveyed, shared several features in common: the farmstead typically consisted of house, barn, and a variety of outbuildings and yards associated with either the house or the barn. The farmstead stood more-or-less in the center of the property and near or on a road. Frequently, house and barn were divided by the road. There might, additionally, be a tenant house nearby, and it was common for married children to build their own farmstead on land immediately adjoining their parents. Occasionally, relatively

affluent parents enlarged their farm by buying contiguous parcels as their family increased, building house for their adult children and setting them up in farming on these adjoining lands. Sometimes the father took his sons and sons-in-law into partnership with him, and the siblings sometimes continued farming as a unit after their father's death. The Cerny farm, detailed below (Figure 1a), is an example of such a farm. Therefore, while the individual farmstead can be isolated and analyzed for its functional interrelationships, to understand the larger processes, spanning life-cycles, it is necessary to enlarge one's field of vision and include at least the extended-family settlement, and include resident tenants.

Figure 1

A. CERNEY FARM WITH TWO FARMSTEADS VISIBLE
B. RHODES FARMSTEAD

For the moment, let us return to the individual farmstead. Within this cluster of buildings and fenced yards, male and female domains are relatively well defined. Within the barn and its yards, the husband has primary authority over the organization of space and work; within the house and its yards, the wife has primary authority. Each is relatively free to dispose of the products of his or her domain with little interference from the other, although a cooperative ethic, in the best of circumstances, led to joint decision-making on important decisions.[1]

The male domain is what people generally conceive of as the "farm proper." Here the horses and mules were bred, fed, worked, and in some cases sold. Pigs, beef, and perhaps milk cows were bred, raised, and sold. The fields were where men broke the ground, planted and harvested the crops, and carried them back to the barns and granaries for storage and sale. The woodlots provided fencing and, in many cases, lumber for the various buildings.

FIGURE 2

DRAWING OF RHODES/CERNY HOUSES, 1880s & 1844

The household was equally important, although not so visible, in farm production. The house, with its yards and outbuildings, was warehouse and dormitory, workshop and infirmery for the farm labor force. On its porches and kitchen most of the food was processed and made ready to eat. In its attics, cellar, and sheds the food was stored. The "kitchen garden" provided the bulk of daily food. The poultry flock and, in many cases, small dairy, were operated by the farm wife, with proceeds from sales of these products used to purchase household necessities and occasional luxuries. Some women developed other small money-making enterprises, as well, raising flowers, baking for town customers, sewing to order, taking in boarders, and so forth. Sewing, mending, and other light construction activities occurred under its roof, generally undertaken by women but also, as in the case of resoling shoes, by men. Most medications were made and administered by the wife or skilled neighbors. When people died, they were prepared by neighboring women and laid out in the house for visitation.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the farm house frequently housed farm laborers as well as family members and related and unrelated dependents. These might include orphans taken in for their labor and/or for charity, indigent elderly widows and widowers, and unmarried or widowed sisters and brothers. While family size varied widely, depending both on individual situation and stage of the family cycle a household size of 14 or more would not have been uncommon.[2]

The house was often also the site of community entertainment. The large living room of the Green house (now the Cerny house), for example, was often used for square dances in the early years of this century. The side

yard of the Rhodes house was used not only to store firewood and hang laundry, but was also set up for croquet and older neighborhood men came over to play on Sunday afternoons.

The wife, therefore, was not only a primary producer herself, both in the sense of giving birth to a large part of the labor force and in doing a great deal of productive labor on which the farm was directly dependent, but she was also the organizer and boss of the labor necessary to fulfill her part of production, largely child labor but, if the family was sufficiently affluent, also house servants.

Despite the specificty of male and female domains, it is inaccurate to conceive of these as separate spheres, whether in the Victorian sense or in terms of labor supply. These domains of farm and house overlapped in certain consistent ways and in other, less consistent and in some cases more conflict-raising ways. Men's production directly contributed to household provisioning. Most significantly, men were largely responsible for raising wheat and corn and livstock. The grains were taken to area mills (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often under contracts negotiated by the Farmer's Union local) both for household consumption and for market sale, and livestock was butchered for home use in addition to being sold.

It is therefore probably not accidental that the wheat harvest and hog butchering, more than any other farm activity, required the coordination of men's and women's work and tapped, as well, neighborhood forms of reciprocal labor exchange. Wheat threshing and hog butchering were the last remaining cooperative forms of labor that survived the commercialization of agriculture in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Wheat threshing was a major early summer activity, as all the farmers on a particular thresherman's route swapped work to bring the sheaves of wheat in from the field to the threshing outfit while the women made an enormous meal which was shared by all the

workers and by visiting townspeople as well.

Hog butchering was a more modest affair, but also brought neighborhood cooperation into play. When a family had a number of hogs to butcher they called their nearby neighbors and relatives together and spent the day at the job. While the men did the heavy butchering the women fixed a dinner. Women also cleaned the intestines cooperatively and both men and women ground and seasoned the sausage. The visitors took home meat and sausage, to reciprocate at a later date. The husband generally was in charge of smoking the meat, while the wife canned head cheese and sausage.

Men's and women's domains also interlocked through the medium of the children, since both used the labor of children more-or-less indiscriminately. While boys tended to do heavier labor and girls lighter (girls would generally not chop down trees or operate a walking plow), boys could be called on to help with heavier household tasks such as laundry and preparing firewood, and girls could be called on to help with lighter farm duties, such as hoeing, picking and packing fruits and vegetables, and driving stock. Individuals interviewed frequently recalled that their mother had switches tucked in various locations around the house, and a memoir (Rendleman n.d.) recalls various acts of minor rebellion against her mother's demands for labor, an indication that this child labor was not always willingly given.

Husbands and wives also had a limited call on each other's labor for specified tasks. The wife had some call on farm laborers and on her husband's labor for such heavy tasks as supplying wood and major renovations of the house and outbuildings, and the husband could call on his wife's labor for periods when extra hands were needed, as for driving stock. Women also frequently supervised the packing of fruits and vegetables during the

harvest of these crops. Women's labor was differentially valued, however, both culturally and materially (Osterud 1985). Such areas of women's production as poultry raising was belittled, with "chicken" becoming a synonym for "coward" (Fink 1986). Equally significant, virtually all narrative and statistical reports of agriculture failed to count women as members of the labor force or as primary producers (Boulding 1980, Rosenfeld 1986:35-38, Sachs 1983). Women generally were paid half to two-thirds of men's wages for agricultural work, and women's rights to hold property was greatly restricted.

The household was dependent on the farm for major investments, and it is in this area that the differential power of the two domains is most strongly revealed. If patriarchal relations between men and women are an ancient part of Euro-American culture, which they appear to be, they were reinforced and given concrete form in the organization, both spatial and social, of the farmstead. As the above account reveals, the farm household was generally incapable of generating a surplus which could be saved for major investments, its production being largely geared to sustaining the day-to-day needs of the farm labor force. In contrast, the farm's productivity was largely geared to expanding the farm operation, as well as simple reproduction.

This differential appears in many cases to have been mediated relatively amicably, either because the wife was willing to live in squalor without complaining, or because the husband was willing to invest in improved housing and facilities. In some cases, however, open conflict revealed the contradiction entailed in combining two different aims of production in one operation. On woman recalled that her mother, who had long nagged her father for a new house, enlisted her son's help one day when her husband was in town. The man returned to find one wall of the house demolished, and no choice but to build his wife a new house. Another woman

I was told about threatened to leave her husband if he did not build her a new house instead of investing in a new piece of equipment. I also collected anecdotes of women who immediately installed indoor plumbing when their husband died. These conflicts were exacerbated in the post-War period when credit became available for farm and home investments and, although farm wives frequently concurred with the decision to invest in the farm before investing in the house, they sometimes did not.

CHANGING COMPOSITION OF WOMEN'S WORK

Changes brought about by the development of and extension of industrial production have continually removed production from cottage and craft manufacture to workshops and factories (Marx 1967 [1887]). Both farm and home activities have been affected, but the impact has shaped each domain differently. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the developing manufacturing industry in the east appears to have had relatively small impact on southern Illinois farms. Women wove fabrics to clothe their families, purchasing some yarns and a few fabrics (Brush 1944); cooking equipment, like metal tools, were purchased, often from local craftsmen. Local tanneries and potteries manufactured leather and utilitarian ware. Aside from a very small inventory of purchased goods, most farm households provisioned themselves with the products of the local community, and relied heavily on domestic production.

After the Civil War corporate capitalism rapidly expanded, and during the 1870s and '80s Union County farms became ever more deeply engaged in commodity production. Although the majority of farmers persistently rejected the new social arrangements (Adams n.d., Scott 1970), the need for cash income became increasingly important. Cash was needed to purchase land, which became increasingly scarce, and a widening inventory of farm equipment.

Additionally, ever more money was needed to pay taxes to maintain roads----which were needed to get products to market--, schools, and other governmental functions.

Not only were new technologies, built in the factories of such industrialists as John Deere, increasingly important for farm production, but they were increasingly important in the household. By the latter part of the nineteenth century home weaving was virtually eliminated, except perhaps for weaving rag rugs (Strasser 1982), and such innovations as wood cook stoves replaced the open (more labor intensive) hearth (compare, e.g., Beecher 1970 [1841] and Beecher and Stowe 1975 [1869]). Houses reflected this change. Two of the farms studied, for example, had houses built prior to purchase of wood stoves--one in 1844, the other a log house built in the 1880s. Both were built with separate summer kitchens, which stood a few feet from the house. Not until around the turn of the century (well after a cook stove was bought) was the breeze way walled in so that family members could pass comfortable from the main house to the kitchen, an example of the carelessness with which men treated their domestic environment.

~~FIGURE 3~~
~~VIEW OF CERNY HOUSE, 'TEENS~~ omit

It was during this period that the "separate spheres"--domestic production for use contrasted to agricultural production for sale--was institutionalized. Nonetheless, the boundaries were fuzzy, for as women replaced their labor with new technologies they, like their husbands, turned to petty commodity production. By the turn of the century, most farm women raised poultry (sold for meat and eggs) and dairy. Newspaper accounts from the 1870s report women drying apples for commercial markets, although commercial drying operations eventually replaced this source of cash. Although subordinated to production for direct use,[3] women seemed no less

prone to engage in commodity production than were their husbands.

Nonetheless, such production appears to have been conceived as supplemental to the primary task of provisioning and caring for the family, in contrast to men's sphere, in which the provisioning tasks were conceived of as supplemental to production for market. Prior to World War II, women produced a significant proportion of household goods. They sewed virtually all children's and women's clothing, and a portion of men's clothing; they processed a very large proportion of all foods used in the family's diet from planting to eating; they, or a neighboring herb doctor, provided most medical care. Except for the wealthier families most housing materials came off the farm, and the farm contributed a large proportion of the materials necessary to sustain the household which, if supplied by the men (e.g., firewood), was organized and managed by the women.

The houses built during this period reflected the changing conception of house as well as widening class divisions within the countryside. Wealthier, "progressive" farmers built Victorian style cottages, reflecting the increasingly dominant notion of home as shelter from a heartless world (Wright 1980). At the same time, the earlier rectangular house, the kitchen now attached, continued to be built. The breezeways of the Cerny and Rhodes houses were walled in, incorporating the kitchen as an integral part of the house. Modern notions of privacy were unevenly adopted, however. While the Victorian style houses tended to provide small bedrooms for one or two people, the older farm houses tended to treat rooms as dormitories. In the Rhodes house, for example, the two sons and their uncle slept in the attic along with the flour, meal, and other supplies. The parents had a bedroom downstairs, but not until the 'teens did the four girls move out of the living room and into a small bedroom addition (figure 4).

FIGURE 4

During the Depression, which for farmers began after World War I, farm households were forced back into relative self-sufficiency. Frequently, as Fink (1986) and Friedberger (1988) document, women's commodity production saved the farm, providing the bulk of the small cash income. As important, the trend to specialization reversed. More Union County farms raised milk cows and poultry in the 1930s than at any other time (Adams 1987:). Oral recollections of the period suggest that the gendered division of labor became less defined as everyone increased their work load to raise a wide variety of fruits and vegetables to peddle to town customers. The Depression, while not eliminating class distinctions--one could tell who "came from a house of plenty and who from a house of poor," as an elderly man recalled--did throw rural communities back upon themselves, impoverishing both the elites and their poorer neighbors.

The New Deal began the institutionalization of far-reaching changes in the region's—and the nation's—economy (see also Marion 1986, USDA 1967). In Union County, these were not to be significantly realized until after World War II, when the Rural Electric Administration cooperative was able to resume wiring the countryside for electricity, road building, interrupted by the war, resumed, and a variety of other programs were resumed and expanded. As indicated in the beginning of this paper, the peculiar post-War conjuncture of Keynesian-based state policies which pumped massive amounts of capital into rural areas and into agriculture, a burgeoning industrial economy which sucked labor out of rural areas and made labor expensive, strong, and increasingly centralized, national and international markets for agricultural products, and a large number of new technologies that had been developed but not widely adopted during the previous 20 years created the conditions for a profound transformation of the farmstead's organization.

All the new programs were predicated on the notion of "separate spheres," a notion which, as I have shown, was only partially enacted in the daily life of farm families.[4] The conjunction of the cultural and structural predisposition to subordinate women's production to men's, to treat the household as a center for consumption-oriented activies and the farm as the center of production-oriented (in the sense of expansive, profit-oriented production) activities, along with governmental and corporate policies which institutionalized these tendencies, gave women few choices as to the new forms of household production.

FIGURE 5
DIFFERENTIAL ADOPTION RATES, HOUSEHOLD AND FARM EQUIPMENT

First, there was a marked differential between farm and household in capital investments (see Figure 5). Plumbing can be taken as an indicator of a major investment in the house that significantly affects women's productivity and comfort. Pumping and hauling water is a heavy, time-consuming task and the necessity of rationing water closely restricts other activities. When the R.E.A. brought electricity to farms after World War II, it was rapidly adopted: In 1945 less than 32 percent of farms had electricity; by 1950 nearly 82 percent had received power and by 1954 95 percent had it. In contrast, only 25.5 percent of farms had running water inside in 1950; by 1960 only 64 percent had invested in indoor plumbing. In 1960, more than half the farm houses used a privy instead of an indoor toilet (Census of Agriculture and Housing). Some of this undoubtedly indicates lack of investment by land-owners in rental houses, (26 percent of all farm housing in 1960), but many of these were also owner-operated homes. In 1960, 79 percent of rented farm houses were not provided with all plumbing facilites. Nearly 30 percent of owner-operated units lacked these facilities as well (Census of the Population, 1960, Table 33).

Second, the technical and organizational innovations catalogued at the beginning of this paper largely replaced manual labor, thereby eliminating one of the most important functions the household provided for the farm--the bearing and sustaining of the farm labor force. Fertility rates reflect this dramatic change: in Illinois, farm fertility rates fell through the 1950s, falling from 3,391 per thousand women to 2,834, while during the same decade fertility increased for urban women, though still remained below that of farm women. In Union County, fertility rates for farm women by 1980 were below those of all other categories of women (Adams 1987:187).

Third, the trend to replaced domestic and craft production with industrially produced goods accelerated. Women's domestic consumption-oriented production was largely replaced by purchased products. Refrigerators, freezers, and commercial slaughterhouses replaced home butchering, smoking, and daily preparation of many foods. Supermarkets largely replaced the home garden and local grist and flour mills. Sugar supplanted sorghum as a primary sweetener. Ready-made clothing became so cheap it was not worth it to sew all the family's clothes, although women continued to sew as a productive hobby. Electric washing machines or, where water was scarce, laundromats in town, replaced the heavy drudgery of washing. By the 1980s farm families frequented fast food restaurants and many farm men, like other working men, eat breakfast and lunch at a neighborhood cafe.

Further, women's commodity production was also industrialized. Fink's detailed analysis of poultry production by farm women in northwest Iowa is largely applicable to southern Illinois. In Union County, throughout the first half of this century over 90 percent of farms raised chickens, with the average number of chickens per farm under 75. The 1950 census indicated the

beginning of the decline; that year only 86 percent of farms reported chickens; by the 1969 census fewer than 10 percent of farms raised chickens, but the average was 275 per farm. Many older women continued to raise chickens to supply their own needs and regular customers even, sometimes, in the face of their husband demonstrating that the chicken operation cost more than it brought in. These women enjoyed their chickens and the appreciation shown by their customers, and the farms were affluent enough to subsidize the project. In addition, it provided a way for the women to earn cash, which they would not have if they abandoned the operation. At the same time, a few farmers began to specialize in poultry production; by 1982 the average number of poultry per farm was 1,200, reflecting two or three large outfits.

Dairying followed a similar trajectory. Until the 1950 census over 80 percent of farms reported dairy cows, although the average number was only 2 to 3. By 1969 only 11 percent of farms had dairy cattle, and the number averaged 12 head per farm. As with chickens, the average numbers probably masks the differentiation between a persistence of very small-scale diaries by older farmers and the development of a few, increasingly large, mechanized dairies. By 1982 only 35 farms still had milk cows, and 17 of those had fewer than 9 head, indicating they were producing only for home use and perhaps a few individual customers since that small an operation could not afford the equipment necessary to sell on the commercial market.

Fink's study demonstrates that, unlike the processes through which women's household work was industrialized and moved out of the home, a process which generally lightened women's work load and was therefore welcomed, women were actively (if covertly) driven out of the poultry business by an ideology that placed commercial enterprises in the male rather than female, domain. Women were not considered by the Extension

Service, other government agencies, or lenders to be eligible for the extension of technical information and credit for investment in new equipment. In addition, by the mid-1960s the increasing industrialization of poultry production removed poultry from most farms and concentrated them as contract enterprises for feed or distribution companies (Marion 1986).

The cultural or ideological predisposition to view women's productive activities as "not work" because they largely fell outside the cash economy was central to reformers' ideas of how to improve women's lives, articulated as the "cult of domesticity" (Matthai 1982). Women were urged to create a beautiful, comfortable house and environs, and to organize the kitchen with efficiency in mind (Matthai 1982, Seymour 1918:Chap. 10, Wright 1980). This class-based ideology of women's role was applicable only to elite farm women who, with the aid of servants, were able to live a more-or-less middle-class life style. Therefore, despite written prescriptions, few concrete attempts were made to promote it to farm women (but see Atkeson 1924, U.S. Commission on Country Life 1944 [1911]. Reformers like Jonathan Periam who were primarily concerned with production recognized the important role farm wives played in production. In his widely-read "Home & Farm Manual" (1884:36) he cautioned farm husbands:

> Woe to the man who shall mar the happiness of the home life. And how many a farmer unthinkingly does this! He amuses himself; he goes to town to buy and sell; he hires labor when there is much to do, but he habitually neglects his fellow-toiler and helpmeet in the house. At the busy season the work heaped upon the "women folks" almost crushes the life out of them. ... The life of too many farmers' wives is what no man could bear, and no woman should be made to suffer. It would be a standing shame to the men of America--a disgrace to our nation--if

anywhere the women should become slaves without even the slave's holidays, as brutally sacrificed to the chase for the almighty dollar, as ever victim dragged before the throne of Moloch. ... Work, the wife of a farmer must, but he should make the burden as light as possible.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, for example, in a 1915 report on a survey of farm housewives, noted that "the department had issued many bulletins and publications designed to give farm women practical aid in household operations, and to assist them in poultry raising, butter making, gardening, and other farm activities commonly discharged by women" (U.S.D.A. 1915:5). Women surveyed by the Department responded with complaints about excessive work loads, but the fact of working was not questioned.

By the 1970s, however, Bennett and Kohl (Bennett 1982:129-32, 163) could describe women's role as primarily "homemaking" centerd on "expressive tasks." This is not an entirely correct characterization, for farm women, having lost their productive potential on the farm, moved into the non-farm labor force in large numbers. However, the ideology embodied in "Home Economics," which limited women's primary activities to nurturing children, sewing, cooking, and "homemaking" was agressively promoted to post-War women (see, e.g., Friedan 1963, Home Extension/Home Bureau records).[5] The "home" was transformed from dormitory, warehouse, and workshop into a domesticated, decorated refuge from the world. Part of the instruction given by the home extension agents and home economists was pre-eminently practical. Farm women did not know how to use electricity; the new equipment required a large number of new skills; farm sanitation facilities were often inadequate and associated diseases were common; and so forth. But most of the instruction was concerned with the "expressive" side of homemaking. Along with learning how to use electric lights came instruction in creating a beautiful, well-lit living space--the selection and arrangement of draperies, furniture, and accoutrements. Along

with instruction in well-balanced diets came aesthetic notions of table setting and fine dining. Parental responsibilities were re-defined from teaching a firm respect for hard work, learned often at the end of a switch, to developing individual potential, a responsibility that rested firmly with Mother. Instruction in sewing taught not only techniques for turning collars to make shirts last longer, but tips in fashionable dressing to disguise "defects" in one's body. The Home Extension program taught crafts of various kinds, designed to expand the horizons of the farm wife and to give her things to do during her increasing amounts of leisure time.

A massive cultural transformation occurred as women, ideologically at any rate, were moved out of production and into consumption. As noted above, this transformation was only partially successful, for large numbers of women entered the labor force. In 1940, only 9.3 percent of farm women were listed in the labor force; this jumped to nearly 25 percent in 1960 and by 1980 nearly 36 percent of farm women were in the labor force (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1940, 1980). These figures reflect as much on women who work on the farm not being considered "in the labor force" (while their husbands are), as it does on their non-farm labor participation. Of the 306 women placed in the labor force in 1940, about 93 percent worked in non-farm jobs. Of the 235 farm women listed in the labor force in 1980, 88 percent worked in non-farm jobs. The greatest increase in jobs held by women are in clerical, sales, and non-domestic service workers. In 1980, the number of profesional workers, which had held relatively steady throughout the previous four decades, jumped sharply, probably reflecting an increase in the number of professional jobs as Great Society programs increased health care and other professional service jobs in rural areas, which encouraged the movement of urban professionals to farms in the 1970s

and allowed some young families to remain on their farms. Comparable movement into the off-farm labor market is documented by Bokemeier, Sachs, and Keith 1983; Bokemeier and Garkovich (1987); and Rosenfeld (1985).

The increasing proportion of farm women entering the non-farm labor force indicates a new structural linkage that has been created between men's and women's domains, although they can no longer be characterized as "farm" and "household." As into they move into full-time jobs, many farm women, like their urban counterparts, are redefining men's and women's roles within the household, demanding that men take a greater share of household chores. However, as farming becomes an ever more precarious business, many mid-sized operations are kept afloat by off-farm income.[6] In 1984, for example, (a particularly bad year for most midwestern years, following on several bad years and to be followed by several more), income from non-farm wages and salaries for all farms represented nearly 31 percent of total household income, while the farm contributed 39 percent (Ahearn 1986:11). Summarizing the results of a nationwide 1979 survey of farm women, Rosenfeld (1985:173) reports that women contributed 54 percent of the family income on those U.S. farms where only the wife had off farm income. This relationship was wryly indicated by a successful, moderate-sized orchardists' quip about his wife's professional job: "She supports my habit," as he gestured across the farmland.

FIGURE 6
CERNY AND RHODES HOUSES, 1950s

The transformation of the household from a vital ingredient in farm production to domestic retreat from production is written into the organization of space in the house. The Cerny house, built in the 1844s (probably the oldest standing farm house in the county), lost its free-standing kitchen some time after the introduction of a wood stove, but

otherwise it remained virtually unchanged from its construction, until the 1950s. In 1890 Jacob Cerny, the son of Bohemian immigrants, bought the adjoining farm and built a large, quasi-Victorian style farm house. Their neighbor's farm, operated by tenants, remained unimproved, with two tenant houses and a post-and-beam stock barn. Jacob's grandson, Norbert, and his new wife Betty, bought the tenant-run farm with its now run-down, but still solid, house. In 1955 the young couple renovated and completely remodeled the house. The old kitchen was torn off and a new, fully modern kitchen built, with an interior access to the basement. The large living room, which had once been the site of square dances (it could handle three squares), was divided into two rooms, a formal dining room and a living room. A master bedroom was added at one end. The upstairs, which had been one open space, used to sleep the boys and store flours and other supplies, was divided into two bedrooms, covering two of the windows in the process. Bathrooms and closets were added upstairs and down. The house is tastefully furnished and decorated inside and out with memorabilia of past times—a dinner bell, mill stones from the nearby creek, an old pump, and other antiques. I should add that Betty Cerny has been an active participant in the farm, and that her house is now that of a semi-retired grandparent, and so not involved in the hectic activities of a house filled with children and all their activities. Nonetheless, in its design and appointments, it is nearly indistinguishable from a home owned by a family that does not farm, a visible indication of the changing role of the household within the farm.

In the 1950s the Rhodes house, too, was modernized. The old summer kitchen was pulled back and a modern electric kitchen installed. Notably, an indoor toilet was installed only in the late 1980s, when the heirs rented it out. While indoor running water was a major labor saving technology, some farm families retained outhouses due to notions of sanitation and

propriety at variance with urban ones.

The pattern of children building near their parents is one that has frequently been retained. Grandparents frequently provide childcare for working parents, both of whom may hold full-time, off-farm jobs. It is common for adult children to work with their parents and siblings in a variety of farm, household and recreational activities, thereby retaining a link to the farm. Except in those cases where a son works with the anticipation of buying his parent's or in-law's farm, these extended famiy links, although growing out of a historic connection with the farm, are largely comparable to those of other small-town and rural extended families. Unlike the earlier periods, when the swap labor of neighbors and kin were vital to the viability of the farm operation, the modern farm functions largely with operator and some paid labor, structurally independent of all other households.[7]

Just as links with other households has become regulated more by choice than by necessity, the distribution of activities within the farmstead has become highly diverse (Blood 1958, Flora and Johnson 1978, Buttel and Gillsepie 1984, Fassinger and Schwarzweller 1984, Rosenberg 1985, Wilkening and Bharadwaj 1968). In the past, farm women's and men's activities fell within a relatively narrow range of possibilities, based largely on class and regional production systems. The modern farm, organized increasingly along industrial lines, has replaced women's prior productive functions with equipment and cash. Like non-farm women, farm women too have left their "separate spheres" for wage labor outside the home and farm (for an analysis of differential impacts of different production systems, see Simpson, Wilson and Young 1988). Unless a woman assumes new roles on the farm, leaving her "separate sphere," becoming as bookkeeper, marketing expert, or farm hand, her

life in the 1980s is little different from her non-farming, rural and small-town counterpart.

NOTES

[1]This paper does not directly address the important issue of decision-making. There is some literature on this, and the interested reader is referred to Bennett 1982 and Barlett 1980, 1988.

[2]According to the 1940 census, 4092 farm children were under 19 yrs., with 1203 farms, indicating an average of 3.4 children per farm. It should be noted that this includes farm laborers who do not necessarily live in the owner's household. (state average in 1910 was 4.4 children per farm woman of 40-44 years of age, according to Special Report of the 16th Census of the United States: 1940, 1948, p. 146-7 [see dissertation]),

[3]The social evaluation of women's labor is indicated by the differential wages women were paid. In the early twentieth century, women received approximately 3/4 of what a man received for field work; children received 1/2. Interestingly, in the 1920s and '30s, when agricultural markets declined drastically, poultry, egg, and butter markets remained relatively strong (Fink 1986, Friedberger 1988).

[4]The notion of women's domain as primarily consumer-oriented was not promoted by all government programs. A strong current of thought within Home Economics promoted women's complementary production to men's. In Union County, for example, the W.P.A. established small cooperative canneries for home canning, in addition to a larger-scale tomato cannery which produced for relief orders [check this--this may have been a war-time concern for the military--oral accounts differ from newspaper].

[5]I grew up during the late 1940s and '50s on a southern Illinois farm, and experienced this "educational process" first hand through 4-H, high school home economics courses, and my mother's active participation in Home Bureau.

[6]Friedberger (1988:127) writes, "Today, when a farm wife's off-farm income can help a business to stay afloat, her contribution is even more important

[than in the traditional farm]. Friedberger's evaluation of the relatively greater importance of the wife's contribution today is puzzling, given his presentation of farm account books (p. 131-2) which show, during the Depression, that cream and eggs, undoubtedly the wife's domain, provided well over half the farm's meager cash income. This income was used to pay creditors, thereby saving the farm, and it also indicates that virtually all the food the family ate came from the farm--largely from the wife's labor.
[7]Good neighbors are still vitally important to those few family farms remaining that operate with only family labor. Neighborly assistance in emergencies, such as an acute illness, fire, or other catastrophe, can mean the difference between losing or retaining the farm.

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Fig. 1a

Cerny Farms

- on left: Home farm
- on right: 1844 Farm, purchased by Cerny son in 1850s

From aerial map, 1965.

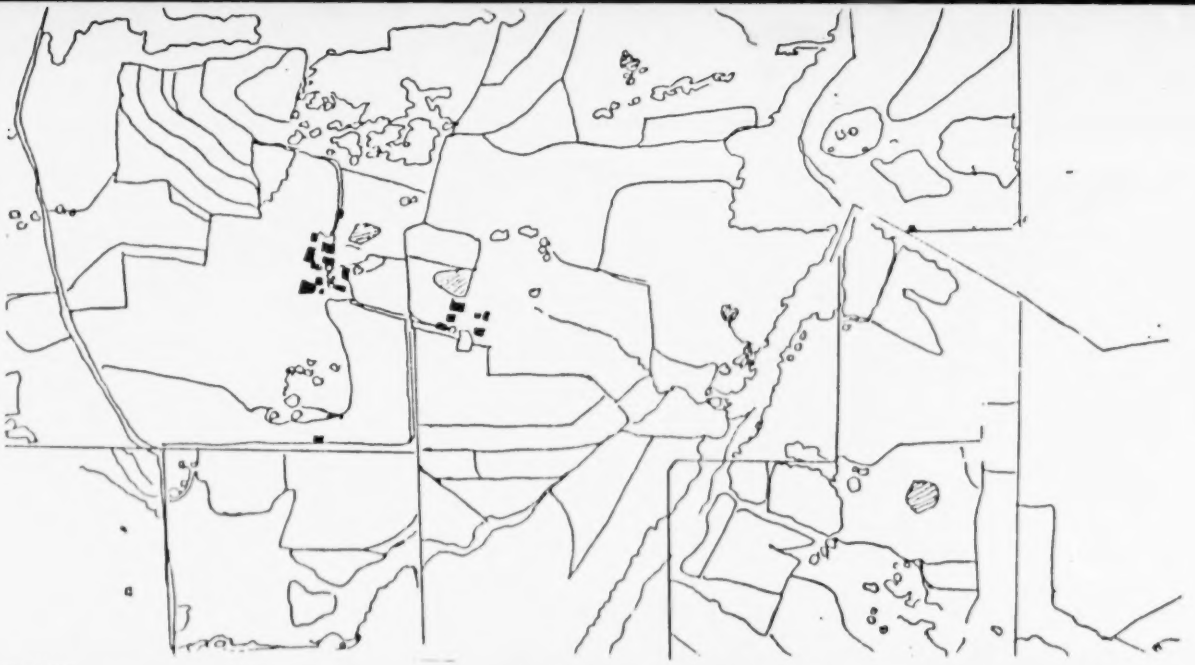
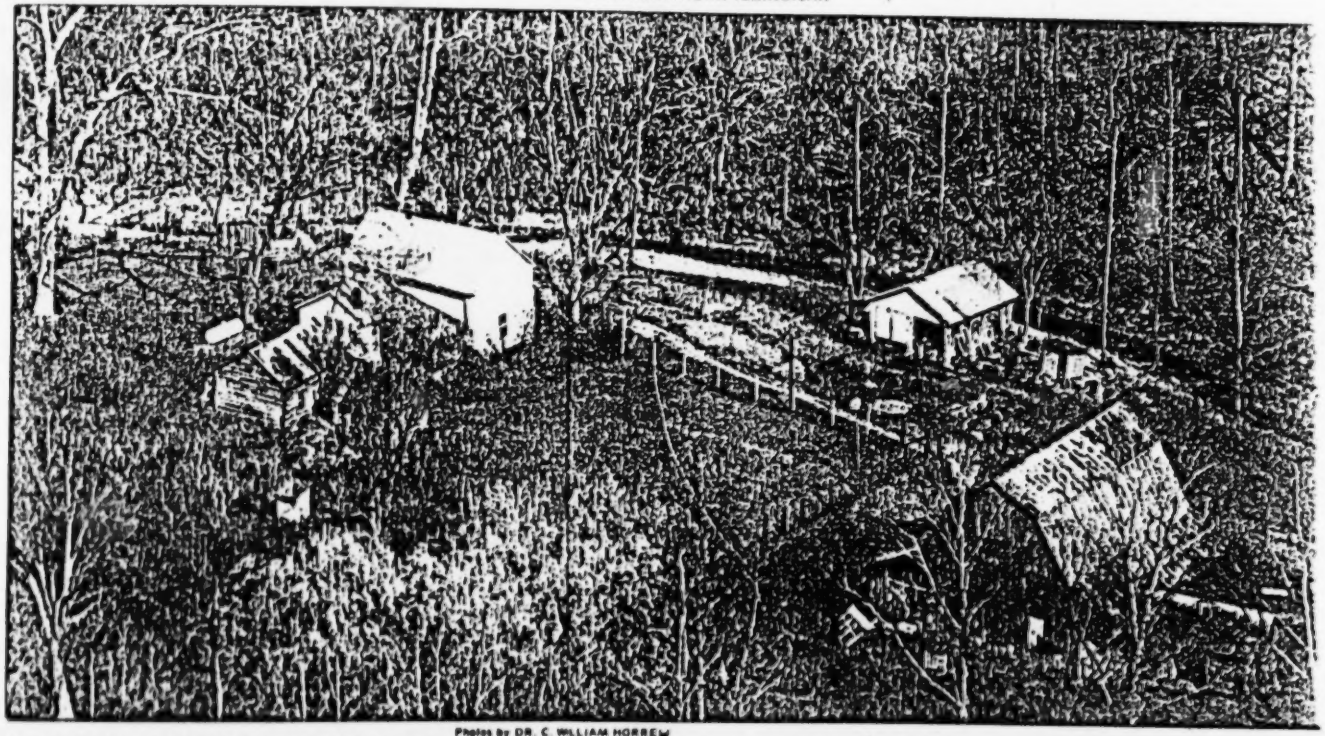


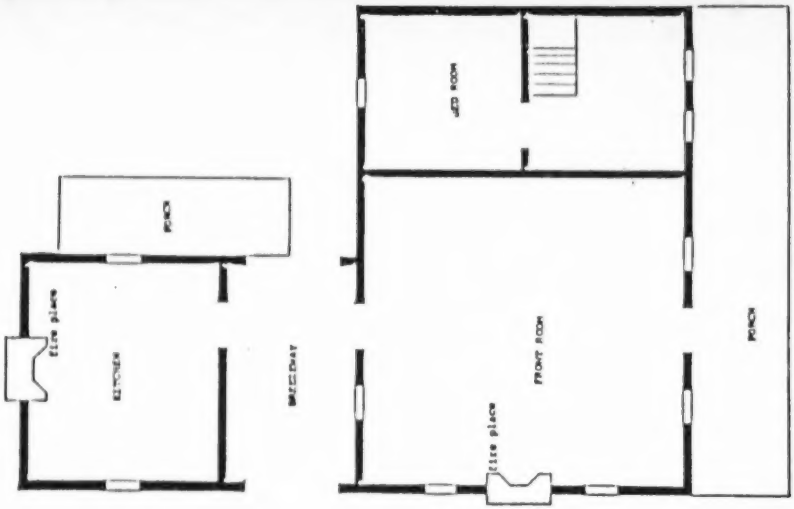
Fig. 1b



Photos by DR. C. WILLIAM HORREY

Meandering Cany Creek and picturesque bluffs in background are the setting of the William S. Rhodes farm in Union County; old log structures are visible at left

Fig. 2. · Cerny House



1850s-1950s

Fig. 2
Rhodes House
ca. 1880-1915

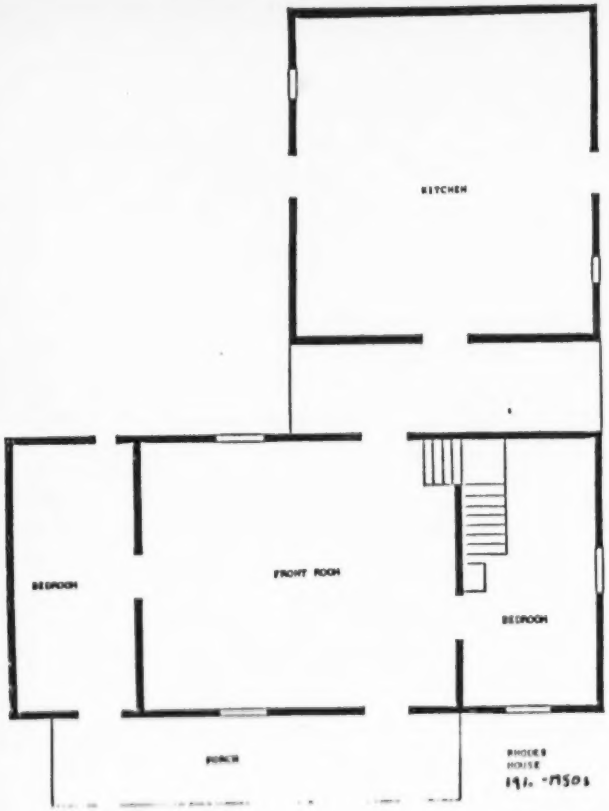
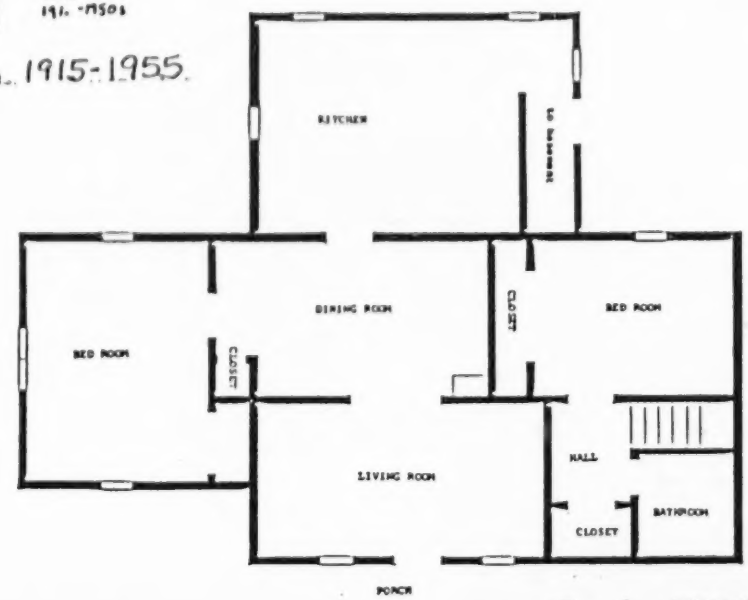


Fig 4. Rhodes house ca. 1915-1955

Fig. 6 Rhodes House ca 1955-



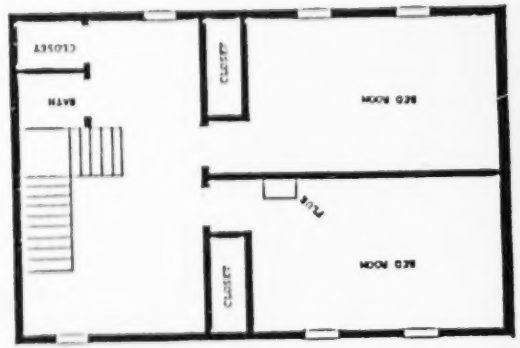


Fig. 6 CERNY HOUSE 1950s

Figure 5
Comparative Adoption Rates
Farm and Household Technology